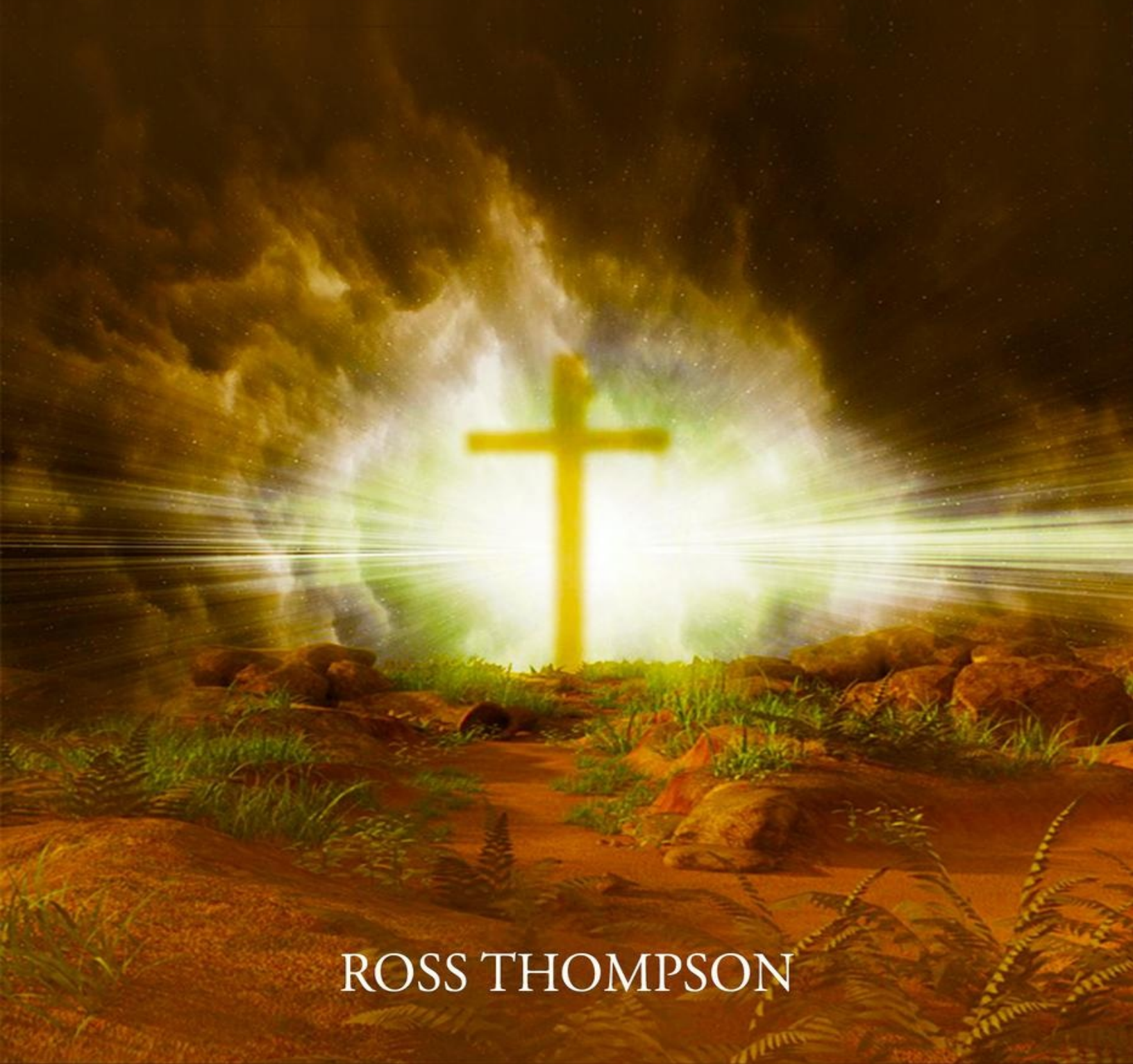


HOLINESS IS EASY



ROSS THOMPSON

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Ross Thompson

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader, the purpose of this book is to bring to your attention parts of the Bible, mainly New Testament, that you may not have thought much about before today. Turning the spotlight on those sections will open new vistas to you about holiness and bring new blessing into your life.

Though it need not be so, for many Christians holiness is as big a mystery as any Sherlock Holmes ever tried to unravel. In truth, it is just a matter of knowing where to look in our book - the Bible

The life of holiness as easy, might be a surprising concept for you. Yet the Bible says it should be. Our salvation is a gift from God, received by faith. It is not difficult to be saved. Holiness is also a gift given to us through the gospel. We did not have to struggle to be saved. We believed and received it by faith. Holiness is ours in the same way. When Jesus became sin (2Cor5:21) for us, He opened the way for every believer to have a pure heart, which is holiness.

The four Gospels reveal Jesus as the only example of a perfect holy life. He described His life this way;

"Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is **EASY** and my burden is light." (Math 11:28-30)

Jesus used 'EASY' to describe His perfect holy relationship with His Father. He also said if we will learn from Him, our relationship with God will be easy and free from heavy burdens.

If we turn back to the Old Testament – Isaiah 35:8 – we read about the Highway of Holiness;

“A highway shall be there and a way. And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it. But it shall be for the redeemed. Who ever walks the road, although a fool (or simple one) shall not go astray (or err therein)”

We will talk more about this Holy Highway. For now, I want to leave you with this thought – God seems to have gone out of His way in the above verse to emphasize how easy it is to live a holy life pleasing to Him. If we use today's

language, He is saying to us; “Listen!! Anyone can live this life of holiness. Human intelligence, character or ability does not come into it.”



HOLINESS EXPLAINED

A verse often quoted regarding holiness is Hebrews 12:14; “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” Do we really know what it means to pursue holiness? I think if I asked most Christians to explain pursuing holiness, they would struggle to give a clear answer. “Don’t behave badly, don’t look at certain things, don’t go to certain places, don’t think about certain things, keep your speech clean, stay away from evil”, would more than likely be typical answers. And each of those is admirable. 1 Peter 1:15 tells us, “.....you also be holy in all your conduct.”

But in the matter of New Testament holiness those answers put the cart before the horse. Paul explained this misunderstanding to the Galatians. “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” Holiness is a supernatural event in the life of the believer. A spiritual event. Holy conduct springs from that one-time event. Our decision to accept Jesus was a one-time event. Regeneration, the new birth, was a one-time event. The receipt of a pure heart, which is holiness, is a one-time event. All these graces are gifts from God to us. They can not be improved upon by human effort.

An old holiness book I have in my library states, “Suppression of depravity is not it’s destruction or removal; and any gradual process which contemplates the subjugation only of indwelling sin is not the proper approach to holiness.” And again, “No Christian is cleansed into maturity, nor do any grow into purity. The Bible nowhere promises maturity all at once by faith, but purity it does. Even a ‘babe in Christ’ may be cleansed from all inbred sin and become a pure Christian; but a ‘babe in Christ’ becomes a ‘young man’ and ‘a Father’ by growth and development and not by cleansing power. (Perfect Love – Rev. J. A. Wood)

The book of Acts reveals the early Church saw purity of heart as a foundation experience for all believers. Acts 15:7-9 records the Apostle Peter explaining to the Apostles and Elders of the Jerusalem Church how the Holy Spirit sent him to preach the gospel to a Gentile household. “And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: ‘Men and brethren you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So, God who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.’”

Peter is referring to the day of Pentecost outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter two, when he says, “God gave them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us.” At that time says Peter, we received an experience that these Gentiles also received - purity of heart by faith. To me it is something of a mystery why God

allowed this information about purity of heart to be revealed late in the book of Acts. It is around ten years after the upper room outpouring when Peter is speaking to the Jerusalem leaders. Perhaps it is because the time factor does not matter to us. We have it all in the one book (New Testament) and we need only read the book of Acts right through to get the information.

Among several references in the New Testament to heart holiness is 1Thessalonians 3:13, “.....So that He may confirm your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” Blamelessness which is holiness before God the Father begins in the heart.

Adam Clarke reminds us again that inward holiness is given to us through Jesus’ atonement out of His heart of love. “For both the Jews and the Gentiles God has provided for each the same blessings, that they should therefore be ἁγίους, holy - fully separated from earth and sin, and consecrated to God and ἀμώμους, without blame - having no spot nor imperfection, their inward holiness agreeing with their outward consecration. In creating man, He drew every consideration from His own innate eternal benevolence, so now, in redeeming man, and sending the glad tidings of salvation both to the Jews and the Gentiles, He acted on the same principles, deriving all the reasons of His conduct from His own infinite goodness.” (Clarke’s Commentary)

You would need to speak to many Christians in our present time before you found an individual who understood and had the experience of heart holiness. Which is strange because the history of the Church from the first few centuries onwards, reveals a large company of believers who understood and embraced the wonderful truth. John G Lake preaching in Spokane, Washington in 1916 was passionate on the subject. “Holiness is the character of God. The very substance of His being and essence of His nature is purity. The purpose of God in the salvation of mankind is to produce in man a kindred holiness, a radiant purity, like unto that of God Himself. If God were unable to produce in him such a purity, then His purpose in man would be a failure, and the object of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ would be a miscarriage instead of a triumph.” In another sermon he adds, “Jesus purposed to make your heart and mine just as sweet and lovely and pure and holy as His own.” (Living in God’s Power/John G Lake...Roberts Liardon)



JESUS EXPLAINS WHERE SIN IS IN MAN

“**T**hen Jesus cried out again, dismissed His spirit, and died. And look! The curtain secluding the Holiest place in the Temple was split apart from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks broke...” (Mathew 27:50,51) We know the Temple and all things of the law were a shadow of good things to come through Jesus. (Hebrews 10:1) We are the true temple of God. “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Holy Spirit dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16) It is stunning when you consider the Holy of Holies was the hub of Jewish life. There, dwelt the holy presence of God commanding fear and awe. Only the High Priest could enter the place and then only once a year after very careful preparation. Suddenly all that is gone, and the Holy of Holies is exposed to public view. Dumbfounded, distressed and dismayed are probably inadequate in describing the impact on the Temple Priests and the Jews in general

The event was symbolic. The veil rent from top to bottom indicated a work of God alone. Jesus flesh was rent, making it possible for the first time in human history since the disobedience of Adam and Eve, for mankind to share the holy nature of God. To be holy at the very centre of our being – the heart. It was the fulfillment of God’s love desire for everyone of us. Which makes it such a calamity that most of the Church has failed to see it, though it is clearly revealed in the Bible. Some of the Bibles most sensational words are Pauls in Hebrews 10 :1,2. “For the Law having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices (under the law), which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? **For the. worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.** Holiness for you and me is to be once purified, having no more consciousness of sins (of being a sinner). The way to accept this marvellous truth is to remember it is a work of God almighty. The cost to Jesus was death and unimaginable suffering. An old hymn says: ‘And none of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the water’s crossed, nor how dark was the night the Lord passed through to find His sheep that was lost.’

It was a supernatural event from God to rend the veil from top to bottom. It was a supernatural event from God to cause the earth to shake and the rocks to split. It was a supernatural event from God when, “...The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints were raised; and coming out of the graves after His (Jesus) resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” (Math 27: 50-53) It is a supernatural event from God that gives us a holy heart. God forbid that we should allow our carnal human mind to reject such a precious blessing.

Jesus explained our biggest problem. Where sin is in man. “So, He said to them, are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that what enters a man from the outside cannot defile him, **because it does not enter his heart** but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?” And He said, “What comes out of a man, this defiles a man. For from within out of the **heart** of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” (Mark 7:18-23)

Jesus was confirming what had been said in the Old Testament. “The heart of man is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9) We are utterly helpless to do anything about the condition of the human heart. We have no cure for it. Praise God, Jesus the Son of God, our saviour, came to seek and to save that which was hopelessly lost.

The centrality of the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Tabernacle, marked holiness as the crucial need of the Israelites and all mankind. The veil rent immediately after Christs death on the cross reveals what was first in Gods mind regarding our salvation.



HOW TO BE HOLY

In my opinion the Highway of Holiness of Isaiah 35:8,9 mentioned previously, is a prophecy of the normal Christian life. It seems to imply two experiences for Christians. In the verses the redeemed (born again) have yet to step up and walk on the highway, which is a metaphor for a holy life. That was the experience of the twelve disciples. John 21:19-22 records an event where it seems they were born again. "And the same day at evening being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When He had said this, He showed then His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So, Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent me I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

At another of His appearances Jesus instructed the twelve to wait in Jerusalem until they received power from on high. That came in the upper room on the day of Pentecost and was their second experience of the Holy Spirit. We have seen from Peters testimony a cleansing of the heart was part of the second experience. Historically most teaching about holiness has ratified a time gap as Scriptural, between regeneration and the power and holiness experience. John Wesley said he could not think of one instance of no time gap between a believer being born again then receiving power and holiness. A passage in the book of Acts challenges any rigid teaching on the subject.

It is the record of Peters preaching the gospel to the household of Cornelius, a Roman Centurion. The same incident Peter spoke of to the Church leaders at Jerusalem. "While Peter was still speaking (preaching the gospel) these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." (Acts 10: 44-46) This was the first time these Gentiles had heard the gospel. Peter said they received a pure heart at this time. The people then were born again, received power from on high and a pure heart all at the one time from the Holy Spirit.

Can you think of a single instance in your experience when a sermon on receiving the power or fullness of the Holy Spirit included a pure heart as part of that teaching? I know I can't. There is a high probability you are born again and have received power from on high but had no teaching about heart purification. Does that mean you have a pure heart but have not recognized it? Or, because faith in the word must precede all our spiritual experiences, did you receive power but not heart purity? I don't think it matters whether you have an answer to those questions. The important thing to do is to come to God and say you

want a pure heart. Tell Him you had no previous teaching on the subject but now you see it clearly in His word. Accept that He wants you to have the experience and receive it by faith. Ask Him to give you any more wisdom on the subject you may need. We are promised He will give that wisdom liberally if we ask in faith. (James 1:5,6) One way or the other you will soon become aware of a spiritual change in your life.

To finish this chapter here are some further comments by Adam Clarke about holiness. He is commenting on Jesus statement in Mathew 5:48 which he says means holiness. "Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

"But it may be that the term perfection is rejected because it is not understood. Let us examine its import. The word perfection in reference to any person or thing, signifies that such a person or thing is complete or finished; that it has nothing redundant, and is in nothing defective. As someone has said, we count those things perfect which want nothing requisite for the end whereto they were instituted. And to be perfect often signifies, 'to be blameless, clear, irreproachable.' A man may be said to be perfect who answers the end for which God made him."

"The whole design of God was to restore man to His image and raise him from the ruins of the fall, in a word, to make him perfect, to blot out all his sins, purify his soul and fill him with holiness; so that no unholy temper, evil desire, or impure affection or passion should either lodge or have any being within him; this and this only is true religion or Christian perfection. **A less salvation**

than this would be dishonourable to the sacrifice of Christ, and the operation of the Holy Ghost; and would be unworthy of the appellation of 'Christianity'. Those who deny it, deny the whole scope and design of divine revelation and the mission of Jesus Christ." (Adam Clarke's Commentary) It is interesting to note, over 100 years separated Adam Clarke and John G Lake, yet their passionate teaching on holiness is significantly similar.



APOSTLE PAULS LIFE REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE

Paul called himself the chief of sinners. He is also the leading teacher of holiness in the New Testament. “Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man: but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” (1Timothy 1:13-15) He is referring to his life before accepting Christ.

He says the same thing in 1Corinthians 15:9,10. “For I am the least of the apostles who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am...” It is the “I am what I am,” we will be looking at in this chapter. Once we shift to looking at Pauls Christian life, the difference is clear. 1Corinthians 4:3 “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.” The former blasphemer and insolent man now, knows nothing against himself and he wastes no time on introspection. “Am I right with God?” or “have I confessed all my sins?” are questions that have no place in his daily life. I am sure he would be mystified or even offended on the Lords behalf, why a Christian would think that way.

Pauls letter to the Ephesians (1:3,4,) reveals why he lives as he does. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”

A popular belief prevails, using Romans seven as a testimony of Pauls struggle with the inward sin nature. How do we equate this view with the above verses where we see Paul having no struggles at all? Certainly, Paul seems to be struggling with something in Romans seven.

I have seen Theological volumes, books, articles and even Seminars confidently teaching the sin nature struggle idea. It highlights to me the need for us to diligently confirm from our own Bibles what we hear. The fact is that a close look at Romans seven and other parts of Romans shows no evidence at all of Paul striving with inward sin.

If we turn first to Romans six we read in verse 22, “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your present reward in holiness and the end everlasting life.” No struggle with sin here, and a clear declaration the people he is writing too, having become Christians, are in fact free from sin and are holy. Obviously, the writer must also be free from sin and holy. Moving back further to Romans 2:28,29. “For he is not a Jew who is one

outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.” Circumcision of the heart is another of the ways Paul describes a pure heart.

These Christians have what Paul obviously considers to be the basics of the new life in Christ – a pure heart and holiness. He also starts a new theme in Romans six which sets us on the path to proper interpretation of Romans seven. Romans 6:11,12, “Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in it’s lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

To paraphrase we could say, “You are holy now with a pure heart, but one more thing you need to understand and learn to deal with. Your body (members) is the last vestige of sin you still have with you. You need to control it and present it to God for His use.” Now we begin to have light on the true meaning of Romans seven. The entirety of Romans seven is Paul continuing to teach the need to not live according to the prompts of the body, but rather to live in the Spirit. The tricky part needing careful reading are verses 16,17,18. “If then I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me **(that is in my flesh)** nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.”



UNLESS WE SORT THIS out correctly we are left with Paul not making sense. We have seen earlier he has established his readers are free from sin, have a circumcised heart (pure) and holiness. Now he is talking about sin that dwells in him. We would have every right to be confused if he had not added the comment in brackets. It is as if he thought, ‘Oh, I had best make my meaning clear.’ Then he adds the brackets **(that is in my flesh)** and says, ‘I am talking about my body here.’ In the confines of the chapter itself we would also have confusion because he says in verse 22, “For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.” He can’t be wrestling with inward sin and be delighting in the law of God with the inward man at the same time. He makes it crystal clear in the last four verses. “For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another **law in my members**, (body) warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin **which is in my members** (body). O wretched man that I am! who will deliver me from this **body** of death? I thank

God – through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with **flesh (body)** the law of sin.” Romans eight continues with an earnest exhortation to live in the Spirit and reject the deeds prompted by the body.

I think it more than likely Paul wrote as he did in Romans to communicate with new Christians at their level of experience. Other parts of the New Testament show that he had settled the body issue in his own life, which allowed him to live a struggle free life with God. “I keep my body under control and make it my slave, so I won't lose out after telling the good news to others.” (1Corinthians 9:27)

Although we have a pure heart, making us holy before God, we all need to learn to be spiritual people living submitted to the Holy Spirit. It is a fact if we are Christians we are in the Spirit. “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you...” (Romans 8:9) Each of us needs to learn to maintain that condition, in the power of the Spirit, in daily living.



**APOSTLE JOHN BELIEVED WE CAN
LIVE WITHOUT SINNING.**

Now! Can I back up that headline with chapter and verse? I believe so. Let's look at 1 John 2:1. "My little children, these things I write to you, **so that you may not sin....**" Here John gives us one of his purposes for writing this letter – that his readers may not sin. If you apply this teaching of mine, he says, you will live without sinning. There is no other way to interpret that declaration. The modern Church has skipped quickly over those words and focused on the rest of the verse, "And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Those words describe second best as far as John is concerned. And if we think about John himself, he could only have written those words in truth, if he was not sinning.

Returning again to my bookshelf and a paragraph from another old holiness book; (Regarding John's statement 'And if anyone sins') "But even these 'surprise sins' as they may be designated, are not a necessity. The 'if' implies they are not. 'If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father.' What nonsense it would be to use this word if there were no room for a condition! How absurd it would be to say, "If any man sin, for every man does sin!" And how directly contrary to the tenor of the Epistle! The Scriptural doctrine is undoubtedly this: Christians need not and do not sin, but capability to sin remains. Should one be overtaken in a fault let him not despair. God, in His mercy, has made sufficient provision in Christ for his forgiveness and cleansing again, if he confesses the wrong he has done.

He adds these thoughts to the subject; "No power on earth or in hell can compel a man to sin who relies upon God to be kept from it. There is almost excess, and extravagance of victory implied in the word which the apostle coined to express his experience. 'We are more than conquerors.' Dr. Rendel Harris says; 'We should render it exactly by saying, we over- over conquer.' If man were left to himself we should all admit the thing is impossible, but it is not a question of what *we* can do, but of what *He* can do. Cannot we, by the grace of God, live one minute without sin? If a minute, why not an hour? If an hour, why not a day? If a day, why not a year? There can be no continuous victory over sin unless such victory is expected, and no Christian will expect what he believes cannot be experienced. We are weak, but through 'Christ strengthening' us, 'we are able to do all things.' 'All things are possible to him that believeth.'" (New Testament Holiness/Thomas Cook)

A doctrine has been made from a few verses in 1 John 1: 7-10; "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another; and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” These verses are used to support the teaching that Christians should always be confessing their sins to receive cleansing, and to stay in right relationship with God. To put it another way; Christians must be preoccupied with their sins daily to receive forgiveness and cleansing. The first problem with this teaching is that it does not consider the information in other parts of John's letter. A discussion or conclusion is not valid unless all available information on the subject at hand has been considered.

In one of their adventures fictional detective Sherlock Holmes gives this advice to his compatriot Dr Watson, ‘It is an error to argue in front of your data, you can find yourself insensibly twisting them around to suit your theories’. Holmes’ modus operandi was to always approach each mystery from a blank slate and to subordinate emotion and theory to discovered facts. Purity of heart is a heart free from sin. If we examine the data given to us about Christ's salvation, it is not possible to come to any other conclusion.

As an example, let's take 1 John chapter 1:10, *‘If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and the truth is not in us,’* and the next verse which is chapter 2:1, *‘These things I write to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’* In the second reference John is giving one of his reasons for writing the letter; that his readers may not sin. If they give attention to his writing, they will live without sinning. Doesn't that seem to contradict what he has just said in the previous verse? If I can live today without sinning because of John's letter, does that mean that I call God a liar if I tell somebody today that I have do not sin?

If we contrast other parts of John's letter with the teaching that Christians are always sinning and needing to confess, we find the teaching has very little support. Here is a brief list; 3:6 *Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him or known Him.* 3:8 *Whoever sins is of the devil.* 3:9 *Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.* 5:18 *We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.*

How then, do we interpret those first few verses in chapter one? Talking about Jesus in 1:2,3 John says, “The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life that was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ.” He is talking to those who do not yet have fellowship with the Father and Jesus. In short, he is preaching the gospel.

1 John 1:1-10 is exhortation from John to accept what God has said in the gospel. All are sinners needing a saviour. If we say we have never sinned we make God a liar, regarding what he has said in the Gospel. If we admit that we are sinners as the gospel says, and confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us by the blood of Jesus. If we say we don't need the gospel we deceive ourselves. The **original** Amplified Bible uses the words 'truth of the gospel' or 'the message of the gospel', three times in those verses.

That John also wrote this letter to refute false teachers who had arisen, is generally agreed upon by Commentators. Cerinthus, the Gnostics and the Docetes, were all loudly challenging the validity of the gospel presented by the apostles. Denial of Jesus divinity, that He did not come in the flesh, and the negation of His atonement were their main themes. Chapter one seems to be an opening salvo from John against these heresies.

Adam Clarke's comments on Christians being preoccupied with sin may come as a surprise to many. "We are to come to God for an instantaneous and complete purification from all sin, as for instantaneous pardon. In no part of the Scriptures are we directed to seek the remission of our sins seriatim - one now and another then, and so on; neither gradation pardon nor gradation purification exists in the Bible. For, as the work of renewing and cleansing the heart is the work of God, His Almighty power can perform it in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." And it is this moment our duty to love God with all our heart and we cannot do this until He cleanse our hearts, consequently He is ready to do it this moment... believing now, we are pardoned now; believing now we are cleansed from all sin now." (Adam Clarke's Commentary)

In his book, 'Mystical Union,' John Crowder says, "If this (holiness) is something that comes progressively or is something you can accomplish, please tell me how far along the holiness scale are you? Are you, forty percent pure? Eighty percent pure? How about ninety eight percent pure"? He adds, "you are not becoming holy. That is an incongruous concept. You are adding an unnecessary and confusing element to the finished work of the cross". (Mystical Union - can be purchased at book retailers and www.thenewmystics.com)



THE FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND PURITY

Using trees as a metaphor for people's lives and hearts, the Lord knocks some of our accepted teachings out of the park. Throughout the Bible God reveals his dislike for half commitment or double mindedness. In Revelation chapter four he expresses his wish that his listeners were either hot or cold in their response to him. If lukewarm they are in danger of being spewed out of His mouth. His preference in trees is the same: "Either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things". (Math 12:33,35) He reinforces that in another section by adding, "a good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit". (Math 7:18) We are either one or the other.

The New Testament provides no evidence at all for believing we have two natures - a sin nature and Gods nature, nor for the idea we sin continuously and must confess our sins daily to stay in fellowship with God? Those ideas are saying Christs atonement was inadequate. Complete purity or complete defilement is a constant theme in the New Testament. Mathew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Blessed are those who's whole heart is pure. Titus1:15, "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled." Some translations have 'To the pure in heart all things are pure.' Here again we have only two sorts of people – the pure or the defiled and unbelieving. Revelation 22:11, "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." I am not sure why righteousness and holiness are separated here. It may be a response to the two states of defilement mentioned.



God does not do things in a half measure, wishy washy fashion. Paul gives us a decisive and unambiguous description of the gospel in 2Corinthians 5:21, "For He made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." The Living Bible says, "For God took the sinless Christ and poured into Him our sins. Then, in exchange, He poured Gods goodness into us." A direct transfer from one to the other. Paul is talking of the entirety of our being when he says, "that we might **become** the righteousness of God in Him."

We can use a portion of Jesus' sermon on the mount to demonstrate purity in practise in everyday life. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'you shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Mathew 5:28) It is the condition of the heart Jesus is talking about here. He is applying some pressure, you might say, with the intent of making his listeners feel the need of the change of heart only He can supply. Previously we read He said adultery comes out of the heart of a man. (Mark 7:21). It is not looking that is the problem, but the condition of the heart of the man who is looking. Earlier on in the sermon He declared a blessing on the pure in heart. Now His hearers are feeling the acuteness of their need of it. We touched on Titus 1:15 where Paul said, "To the pure in heart all things are pure." Therefore, we can agree with Jesus. Blessed are the men who look at a woman from a pure heart. Adultery is no longer an issue.

"But He (Jesus) said, 'The things that are impossible with men, are possible with God.'" (Luke 18:27)

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BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

All that we are as new creations in Christ comes from Jesus' atonement as the Lamb of God. His suffering and death on the cross were for us. We died there as sinners in Him. Sin and the sinner came to a halt in Jesus' death. Sin and the sinner ceased to exist as the Lamb of God payed the full price in atonement for all who will receive it. We have not understood the full import of John the Baptists statement. "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! the Lamb of God who takes away the worlds sin.'" (John 1:29) Paul said it this way, "...But now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (Heb 9:26) Previous to this Paul has been discussing the non-stop daily sacrifices for atonement in the Old Testament. But now! He says, **Once**, and once only in His death has Jesus put away sin. Nothing else needed – "It is finished".

"It (Christs death) carried sin away in reality, the others only representatively." (Adam Clark)

If everything the sinner was and did died at Calvary with Christ, does that leave any room for a Christian to still have a sin nature? Of course it does not. It is a fiction designed to deprive believers of the full benefit of Jesus' death and an attempt to subvert the truth of Christ's atonement. We could paraphrase Hebrews 9:26 as, 'sin and the sinner dies here' or 'the sinner and his sinning stops here.' The two phrases 'takes away' and 'has put away' regarding sin, mean a once and for all removal. If we believe we still have a sin nature and need to be daily confessing sins to God, we are really saying Jesus' atonement wasn't enough. The question also arises; if I still have a sin nature when will I get rid of it? The popular idea seems to be at death.

Adam Clarke had something to say on that issue. "Some say the body of sin in believers is, indeed an enfeebled, conquered and deposed tyrant, and the stroke of death finishes its destruction. So, then the death of Christ and the influences of the Holy Spirit were only sufficient to depose and enfeeble the tyrant sin; but our death must come in to affect his total destruction!? Thus, our death is, at least partially, our Saviour!? and thus becomes the means of finally destroying it: that is the effect of a cause can become so powerful as to react upon that cause and produce its annihilation!? The divinity and philosophy of this sentiment are equally absurd. It is the blood of Christ alone that cleanses from all unrighteousness: and the sanctification of the believer is no more dependent on death than his justification. If it be said that believers do not cease from sin until they die, I have only to say they are such believers as do not make a proper use of their faith: and what can be said more of the whole herd of transgressors and infidels? They cease to sin when they cease to breathe? If the Christian religion bring no other privileges to its upright followers, well may we

ask, wherein doth the wise man differ from the fool, for they both have one end! But the whole gospel teaches a different doctrine." (Adam Clarke's Sermons)

What was Jesus' main mission; his primary purpose in coming from heaven to this world? Can it be stated in a few words? It can, and John the Baptist has done it for us, "behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) The words 'takes away' can also be translated 'to bear up' and 'to remove'. Jesus' main mission? To remove the sins of the world. 'The Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all'. (Is 53:6) Those words are a reminder of the personal aspect of salvation. In a large sports arena at a popular event the crowd might number ninety thousand. Each of those individuals had to pass one at a time through the entry gates showing their ticket to gain entry to the event. Though Christ died for the sins of the world, each of us must make the choice to receive Jesus as our personal saviour to enter the blessings of freedom from sin.

We could paraphrase Jesus' main mission this way, 'Christ died for a world full of sinners'. When John says, "Christ died for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2) He meant for every human being in the world. To remove the sins of the world Jesus had to do something for the sinners. There would be no point in God forgiving sin and guilt if those who remained had, by nature, no choice but to keep on sinning. The sinners needed to be changed. We could say; the sinners needed to be removed. And that is what salvation is really all about. In his suffering, death, burial and resurrection, Jesus made it possible for every sinner to be removed from the world.

John Wesley describes the remedy; "He made him a sin offering who knew no sin – a commendation peculiar to Christ. For us – who knew no righteousness, who were inwardly and outwardly nothing but sin; who must have been consumed by the divine justice, had not this atonement been made for our sins. That we might be made the righteousness of God through him – might through him be invested with that righteousness, first imputed to us, then implanted in us, which is in every sense the righteousness of God." (Wesley's notes) Wesley is here commenting on 2 Corinthians 5:21. "For he hath made him to become sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

That is how sinners are removed from the world; they believe the gospel and are made the righteousness of God in Christ. Note the two words became and become. Both describe in this instance the entirety of being. Christ became sin that we might become in the entirety of our being, the righteousness of God in Christ. The sinner has been eliminated. Here is the central truth of salvation. It is stated in various ways throughout the New Testament; A new creation, Holy,

Pure of heart, without blame, children of God, Kings and Priests unto God, Saints, the beloved.

This wonderful salvation is available to every person upon the face of the earth. If you are still wondering about the removal of sinners, we can get confirmation from Paul. "For the love of Christ controls us and urges us, because we are of the conviction that if one died for all, then have all died." (2Cor5:14) He means, because Jesus died for every sinner in the world, they have already died – in Christ. They need only choose to accept his salvation to change from sinner to righteous child of God. Paul is saying this marvellous truth is his motivation to preach the gospel wherever he travels.

Here, in just one book of the New Testament, is abundant evidence for a 'yes' answer to the question. Finality, the end of sin, is the theme of Hebrews. You would have searched in vain for a chair in the Old Testament Tabernacle. The priests were not permitted to sit because their work was never finished. In sharp contrast, Jesus, "when He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God." (Hebrews 10:12) A sermon has stuck with me over the years. The Minister, wanting us to retain the core of his message, kept repeating, "seated Priest- finished work, seated Priest- finished work."



THE HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS

Here are some further points from the prophecy given to Isaiah of a Holy Highway created exclusively for Christians. Isaiah 35:8-13. “It is for the redeemed and they shall walk upon it – the unclean shall not pass over it – no lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there – the simple ones and fools, shall not err in it and lose their way – the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing – they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away”. Walking in or on a way, is found in other parts of the Bible and means, as it does here, a manner of life and actively living that life.

The worlds most elevated roadway, at 4,700 meters, is the Karakoram highway in Pakistan. Gods Holy Highway is infinitely higher because it is beyond the reach of everything unclean in the world, including demons and evil spirits, aptly called lions and ravenous beasts. God seems to want to highlight evils inability to come up on the highway by repeating Himself; “they shall not be found there.”

Important in these verses is the realization we, the redeemed, had no part in the construction of the highway. Our part is to say thank you and begin walking. The work needed to make this high holy life available to us was done by Jesus when he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Heb 9:26) When it was done he said, “it is finished.” (John 19:30) The Holy Highway is the gift from God the Father, of life lived from a pure heart.

It helps to remember you could do nothing to earn your salvation. Christ Jesus had suffered and died and arisen on your behalf, you had only to genuinely receive it. In that atonement He also enabled you to be holy and without blame before Him in love (Ephes1:4) as a gift requiring only genuine repentance. “For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:10)

Praise God, the Holy Highway has no entrance examination, no intellectual standard to be met.

Simple ones and fools are not words you expect to see in a passage like this. Is God red flagging a principle for us here? I think so, and it is two sided. First, successful holy living is not accomplished by human prowess or intelligence. Second, the life of holiness is easy!



RECEIVING A PURE HEART

If, as mentioned in the previous chapter, walking on the holy highway is the gift of life lived from a pure heart. In case you are still not sure here is some more discussion on how to receive a pure heart? The answer is found in Acts 15:7-9. The apostles and elders have gathered in Jerusalem to settle the question if circumcision is necessary for salvation. After much discussion, Peter reminds them again how ten years earlier God had instructed him to preach the Gospel to a Roman Centurion and his household. He tells how God interrupted his sermon and gave them all the Holy Spirit just as he had to the group in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, making it obvious circumcision was not necessary.

The answer we are looking for is in Peters explanation: Peter rose up and said to them, “men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So, God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” Here was a large group of people, not saved, with unclean hearts. Peter arrives and preaches the gospel, and in an instant their hearts are changed as God gives them the Holy Spirit. Miraculous is the best description. In a split second they have been transformed into people who are new inside. ‘Only the power that makes a world can make a Christian’.

(Wesley’s Notes)

The human heart is a major Bible topic, but it does not really go into detail as to what the heart is. Most translators explain it as the central part of a person from which the will, mind, soul and body get their motivation. I wondered about that for a while until I realized it is the experience that matters most. The Centurion and the people gathered with him quite probably new nothing of the Scriptures, had not heard of the Holy Spirit and may have had various ideas about whether God existed at all. After a small amount of gospel preaching, God gave them the experience of a pure heart. Knowledge would have come later through the teaching of the apostles.

Paul calls the experience; “circumcision of the heart in the Spirit.” (Romans 2:29) Which is a reminder no person can get away from spiritual influence in our lives. The ungodly heart is impacted by spiritual evil. The Christian pure heart is impacted by union with holy God.

It is clear here, God is willing to give a pure heart and it is for everybody. If you have not done so previously, start by asking for the Holy Spirit as he was given in Acts two. Then ask for purity of heart and accept both by faith. Jesus explained the faith principle when he said, “Therefore I say to you, whatsoever things you desire when you pray, believe that you have received them, and you will have them.” (Mark 11:24)

If you have questions arising from not previously being taught about heart purity, receive it by faith first. Then talk the questions over with God and He will give you the answers. Jesus addressed the topic of the heart often in his discourses. His first mention underscores the importance of the subject; “Happy are those whose hearts are pure, for they shall see God.” (Math 5:8) Jesus’ inclusion of it in his sermon on the mount establishes a pure heart as a vital experience for our blessing and happiness.



MAKE IT AN EXPERIENCE

“God’s first purpose is to make man good by removing the consciousness of sin from his soul.” John G Lake – Living in God’s Power/Roberts Liardon.

“For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.” (Heb 10:2)

Here John Lake is using the term ‘good’ as it is used in the Bible. Jesus said, “There is none good but one, that is, God” (Math 19:17) Moses had asked God, “Please, show me your glory. God’s reply, “I will make all My goodness pass before you.....” (Exodus 33:19) The purpose of the gospel, says Lake, is to return us to the image and the essence of God.

“Does happy, effortless Christianity sound scandalous to you? Does a daily walk of joyful, sinless existence seem like an impossibility? If the answer is “yes” then allow me to introduce you to the gospel. At least the gospel as you may have never heard it before. The original version is so easy and pleasurable that it’s offensive (to some). John Crowder – Mystical Union

John Crowder is implying here that most Christians do not understand the gospel, and do not have the true experience of it. Why is that? Because we are in a battle. God has done His part. He has openly presented to us all the revelation we need on the subject, in the Bible. He continues to keep the Bible freely available to mankind.

After having read such scriptures as “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) and “For He made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinth 5:21) How rational is it for believers to (a) continue calling themselves sinners, and (b) be preoccupied with sin in their daily lives? It is offensive to God.

This book is about an experience. Unless the experience of a pure heart is received by faith, the revelation from the Bible in this book will remain as just more religious information. The gap between knowledge and experience in Christianity is colossal. The gospel is foolishness to those who hear and don’t accept it by faith. They have no concept of what they are missing out on. A similar situation exists for believers who do not embrace the gospel in truth.

I have continually referred to the Bible in everything I have said in this book. I leave the reader with a scripture verse that applies to all our Bible reading. “But you be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1:22)



The End



About the Author

Ross Thompson lives in Melbourne Australia. He is semi-retired after many years of full time and part time involvement in Pastoral and Evangelistic ministry. He was also a Bible college lecturer and has some Theological qualifications. Presently he uses his teaching gift to write for the edification of anybody interested in Christianity and Christians.

Read more at [Ross Thompson's site](#).